



MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

WOODS PLACE RESERVOIR - ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW OF FISH INTRODUCTION

Description of water body:

Name: Woods Place Reservoir

County: Petroleum

Legal description: T20N, R28E, S9, SE ¼ SE ¼

Name of the drainage where the pond would be located:

The pond is located on an unnamed, ephemeral drainage of Hay Coulee; HUC-6 Crooked Creek – Carpenter Coulee/HUC-5 Lower Crooked Creek/HUC-4 Lower Musselshell River.

Fish species proposed for introduction:

FWP proposes to stock one or more of the following species: rainbow trout, largemouth bass, crappie sp., bluegill, yellow perch

Is this species legally present in the drainage?

At the HUC-4 level, all of the proposed species are legally present. At the HUC-5 level, largemouth bass are legally present, as are crappie sp. and yellow perch upstream in the Upper Crooked Creek drainage.

Species of Special Concern present in the drainage and associated risks:

At the HUC-4 level, blue sucker and sauger are known species of special concern present, with their presence in the drainage limited to the Musselshell River. Blue suckers may be extirpated from the drainage as they've not been documented since 1963. Although not documented, northern redbelly dace and/or northern redbelly x finescale dace hybrids may also be present in the drainage based on professional opinion. Associated risks to species of special concern are considered minimal. The proposed species are present throughout the Lower Musselshell River drainage and the proposed introduction would not result in cumulative impacts.

RISKS:

Potential for impacts on genetic structure of existing fish populations:

☒ None ☐ Minor ☐ Major

Comments: The potential genetic impacts to downstream fish populations of the proposed species are considered negligible. Populations of the listed species may be present

downstream in the Musselshell and Fort Peck Reservoir and are of introduced origin with no conservation concern for their genetic structure.

Impacts to any life stage of existing fish populations due to competition and/or predation?

☐ None ☒ Minor ☐ Major

Comments: The proposed species are piscivorous to varying degrees. Predation on cyprinid populations present in the reservoir would be anticipated. Competition impacts of escaped stocked fish would be of little concern as the species are already present in the Lower Musselshell River drainage and cumulative impacts are not anticipated. Predation impacts of escaped stocked fish on wild populations would vary by species, with potential minor impacts within the Lower Crooked Creek drainage. However, due to the primarily ephemeral nature of the Lower Crooked Creek drainage, predation impacts, primarily on cyprinid and catostomid populations, would be of relatively small scope and limited persistence. Predation impacts downstream in the Lower Musselshell River are of little concern as the species are already present and cumulative impacts are not anticipated.

Impacts to other forms of aquatic life that may be caused by this introduction?

☐ None ☒ Minor ☐ Major

Comments: Aquatic invertebrates and amphibians would be consumed if present, but no population level impact is expected.

Potential for the proposed new species to reproduce in this location:

☒ None ☐ Minor ☒ Major

Comments: It would be anticipated that largemouth bass, crappie sp., bluegill, and yellow perch could successfully reproduce at the proposed location. Rainbow trout would not be anticipated to successfully reproduce in the proposed waterbody.

If necessary, would it be feasible to remove this species after it has been stocked?

Yes, the proposed species could be removed via angling, netting, chemical treatment, and/or cessation of stocking.

Would this introduction result in impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable?

No.

Describe reasonable and prudent alternatives to this action, if any (including no action).

Alternative 1 – No Action: The No Action alternative would result in not stocking the proposed waterbody and not providing additional recreational angling opportunity in Central Montana.

Describe and evaluate mitigation, stipulations, or other control measures enforceable by the agency, if any:

The reservoir and the proposed species would be managed according to the general Eastern Fishing District regulations.

List any other agencies or individuals that may be affected by the proposed introduction:

The proposed waterbody and access to the waterbody occur on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Montana DNRC lands. Personnel from both agencies have been consulted regarding the proposed action and have expressed support for developing recreational fisheries at the proposed location.

List all agencies and individuals who have been notified of this proposed introduction:

BLM – Lewistown Field Office
Montana DNRC – Northeast Land Office

Based on this evaluation, is an EIS required? YES/NO? If no, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for the proposed action.

No EIS required. Action is expected to be minor.

Describe the level of public involvement and, given the complexity of the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate?

To date, there has been no public involvement. FWP has had conversations regarding the proposed fish stocking and location with the BLM and Montana DNRC, both of which have expressed support for the proposed action.

To ensure adequate public involvement opportunity, FWP will distribute notice of this draft EA to local recreational groups, local sporting goods stores, and interested parties. This draft EA will be posted on the FWP website and copies will be made available at the FWP Lewistown Area Resource Office. A notice of the proposed action and EA will be advertised in the *Lewistown News-Argus*.

Given the simple nature and minor impacts of the proposed action, the level of public involvement is deemed appropriate.

Comments will be accepted until: February 4, 2019

Comments may be submitted to:

Mail: Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks
Attn: Woods Place Reservoir Fish Stocking
PO Box 938
Lewistown, MT 59457

Email: clsmith@mt.gov

Online: <http://fwp.mt.gov/news/publicNotices/>

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